

CLAIMS:

What is claimed is:

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1 1. A method for providing a client with a connection to a
2 network, said method comprising the steps of:

3 selecting a connection type from a plurality of
4 connection types; and

5 in response to a receipt of a connection request,
dynamically connecting said client to a selected server of
said network based on a determination of an effective route
for completing said connection request, given said selected
connection type.

6 2. The method of Claim 1, wherein said selecting step
includes the step of providing a graphical user interface
7 with selectable options for each of said plurality of
8 connection types, in response to a user request to configure
9 said client with one of said plurality of connection types.

10 3. The method of Claim 2, wherein said selecting step
11 includes the step of selecting an effective server
12 connection based on a connection history of said client and
13 present connection conditions.

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1 4. The method of Claim 3, wherein said selecting step
2 includes the step of accessing said connection history from
3 a table of server connection parameters, which are utilized
4 to determine said effective connection route.

1 5. The method of Claim 4, wherein said dynamically
2 connecting step includes the step of evaluating said server
3 connection parameters for each of a plurality of servers to
4 determine said effective connection route relative to all
5 other possible routes within said connection type.

6 6. The method of Claim 5, wherein said dynamically
7 connecting step further includes the step of encoding
8 routing information about said effective connection route in
9 a connection protocol of said client.

1 7. The method of Claim 6, wherein said encoding step
2 includes the step of including a call-back mechanism in said
3 connection protocol, wherein relevant connection
4 information, including one or more of said connection
5 parameters, is returned to said client for updating said
6 table.

1 8. The method of Claim 7, wherein said client is equipped
2 with multiple connection media and said dynamically

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3 connecting step includes the step of selecting one of said
4 multiple connection media to complete said connection
5 request.

1 9. The method of Claim 8, wherein said selecting step
2 includes the step of selecting a connecting media, which
3 provides the effective connection route.

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1 10. A computer program product for utilization within a
2 client for connecting to servers of a network, said program
3 product comprising:

4 a computer readable medium; and

5 program code on said computer readable medium, which
6 provides:

7 an interface for receiving user input and
connection requests; and

8 a connection utility for dynamically connecting
said client to one of said servers in response to a
connection request, wherein said one of said servers is
selected based on a determination of an effective route
for completing said connection request.

9 11. The computer program product of Claim 10, wherein
10 program code for said interface further comprises program
code for a connection selection interface for receiving user
selection of a desired connection type, wherein said desired
connection type is selected from a plurality of selection
types including a default server connection, a changeable
default server connection with a suggestion function for
providing an optimal server connection during a later
connection, and an effective server connection based on a
connection history of said client.

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1 12. The computer program product of Claim 11, wherein said
2 program code for said connection utility includes:

3 program code for managing a connectivity table utilized
4 to record a plurality of connection parameters for each of
5 said servers;

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6         program code for determining said effective route based
7         on said connection parameters;

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program code for encoding a connection protocol with
said effective route; and

program code for appending a call-back to said connection protocol, whereby connection parameters from a current connection is returned to update said connectivity table.

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1 13. A system for providing a client with a connection to a
2 network, said system comprising:

3 means for selecting a connection type from a plurality
4 of connection types; and

5 in response to a receipt of a connection request, means
6 for dynamically connecting said client to a selected server
7 of said network based on a determination of an effective
8 route for completing said connection request, given said
9 selected connection type.

10 14. The system of Claim 13, wherein said selecting means
11 includes means for providing a graphical user interface with
12 selectable options for each of said plurality of connection
13 types, in response to a user request to configure said
14 client with one of said plurality of connection types.

15 15. The system of Claim 14, wherein said selecting means
16 includes means for selecting an effective server connection
17 based on a connection history of said client and present
18 connection conditions.

19 16. The system of Claim 15, wherein said selecting means
20 includes means for accessing said connection history from a

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3 table of server connection parameters, which are utilized to
4 determine an effective route.

1 17. The system of Claim 16, wherein said dynamically
2 connecting means includes means for evaluating said server
3 connection parameters for each of a plurality of servers to
4 determine said effective connection route relative to all
5 other possible routes within said connection type.

18. The system of Claim 17, wherein said dynamically
connecting means further includes means for encoding routing
information about said effective connection route in a
connection protocol of said client.

19. The system of Claim 18, wherein said encoding means
includes means for including a call-back mechanism in said
connection protocol, wherein relevant connection
information, including one or more of said connection
parameters, is returned to said client for updating said
table.

20. The system of Claim 13, wherein said client is equipped
with multiple connection media and said dynamically
connecting means includes means for selecting one of said

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4 multiple connection media to complete said connection
5 request.

1 21. The system of Claim 20, wherein said selecting means
2 includes means for selecting a connecting media, which
3 provides the effective connection route.

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1 22. A computer program product for providing a client with
2 a connection to a network, said program product comprising:
3 a computer readable medium;

4 program instructions stored on said computer readable
5 medium for:

6 selecting a connection type from a plurality of
7 connection types; and

8 in response to a receipt of a connection request,
9 dynamically connecting said client to a selected server of
10 said network based on a determination of an effective route
11 for completing said connection request, given said selected
12 connection type.

1 23. The computer program product of Claim 22, wherein said
2 program instructions for said selecting step includes
3 program instructions for providing a graphical user
4 interface with selectable options for each of said plurality
5 of connection types, in response to a user request to
6 configure said client with one of said plurality of
7 connection types.

1 24. The computer program product of Claim 23, wherein said
2 program instructions for said selecting step includes

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3 program instructions for selecting an effective server
4 connection based on a connection history of said client and
5 present connection conditions.

6 25. The computer program product of Claim 24, wherein said
7 program instructions for said selecting step includes
8 program instructions for accessing said connection history
9 from a table of server connection parameters, which are
10 utilized to determine an effective connection route.

11 26. The computer program product of Claim 25, wherein said
12 program instructions for said dynamically connecting step
13 further includes program instructions for encoding routing
14 information about said effective connection route in a
15 connection protocol of said client.

1 27. The computer program product of Claim 26, wherein said
2 encoding means includes means for including a call-back
3 mechanism in said connection protocol, wherein relevant
4 connection information, including one or more of said
5 connection parameters, is returned to said client for
6 updating said table.

1 28. The computer program product of Claim 27, wherein said
2 client is equipped with multiple connection media and said

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3 program instructions for said dynamically connecting step s
4 includes program instructions for selecting one of said
5 multiple connection media, which provides the effective
connection route, to complete said connection request.

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29. A graphical user interface of a browser running on a computer system, comprising:

a first set of user selectable buttons representing a plurality of connection media, said buttons having a first display characteristic indicating when a functionality associated with each of said first set of user selectable buttons is presently available, a second display characteristic indicating when said functionality is not available, and a third display characteristic indicating when one of said first set of user selectable buttons has been selected; and

a second set of user selectable buttons representing a user preference for server connections including a default server selection, an override default selection, and an automatic routing selection.